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DESIRED DISTRIBUTION:

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R 052036Z AUG 98
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C B N F I D E N T I A L STATE 142596

STADIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

E.D. 12950: DECL: 12/31/99

TAGS: AMGT, BL, CO, PE, EC, VE

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR AMBASSADOR - DCM - POL - ECON

(U) CLASSIFIED BY MICHAEL MEIGS ARA/AND, DEPARTMENT OF
STATE. REASON 1.5 D

FOLLOWING IS THE ASDAR FOR AUGUST 4, 1998

1. (C) COLOMBIA: 400 FARC ATTACKING 200 CNP/MILITARY IN SOUTH. ABOUT 400 FARC TROOPS LAUNCHED A 4 A.M. ATTACK AGAINST THE CNP BASE AT MIRAFLORES IN GUAVIRE PROVINCE MANNED BY >2 POLICEMEN AND 120 SOLDIERS. A CNP CRISIS CENTER IN BOGOTA REPORTS > CONFIRMED GOVERNMENT FORCES KILLED, 25 WOUNDED AND >0 MISSING IN ACTION. THE FARC CLAIMS TO HAVE CAPTURED 20. REMAINING GOC FORCES ARE SURROUNDED AND CUT OFF FROM AERIAL REINFORCEMENT AND

SUPPLY BY HEAVY RAINFALL, CLOUD COVER AND HOSTILE FIRE. THE ARMY HAS BEEN SEEKING UNSUCCESSFULLY TO SEND IN 2 BLACK HAWK GUNSHIPS AND TWO RUSSIAN-BUILT MI-17 TRANSPORT HELICOPTERS WITH AIR COVER FROM CNP OV-10 AIRCRAFT. GOC FORCES COULD BE OVERRUN SOON UNLESS THE AIRFORCE CAN GET REINFORCEMENTS INTO THE TOWN. NO AMCTS ARE IN MIRAFLORES.

2. (U) ECUADOR: EARTHQUAKE STRIKES COAST; DAMAGE UNDETERMINED. THE TOWN OF BANIA DE CARAQUEZ, ON THE COAST NORTH OF MANTA, WAS THE EPICENTER OF A QUAKE AT 1:45PM TODAY. THE QUAKE, ESTIMATED AT 6.0 ON THE RICHTER SCALE, FOLLOWED A LIGHTER QUAKE ONE HOUR EARLIER. THERE WAS NO

SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE IN QUITO BUT THE SHOCK WAS PERCEPTIBLE

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ENOUGH TO CAUSE EMBASSY EMPLOYEES TO EVACUATE THE BUILDING. IN GUAYAQUIL THE ELECTRICITY IS OUT BUT NO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE REPORTED. TELEPHONE SERVICE HAS BEEN DISRUPTED AND ONE REPORT INDICATES THAT BUILDINGS WERE DESTROYED NEAR THE EPICENTER WHICH ALSO HAPPENS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE AREAS HARDEST HIT BY EL NIÑO FLOODING EARLIER IN THE YEAR. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON CASUALTIES. TWENTY PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WORK IN THE AREA, BUT FEW OTHER AMERICANS ARE LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED.

3. (C) COLOMBIA: BAD WEEK FOR CONGRESS REPRESENTATIVES. ELN GUERRILLAS KIDNAPPED SENATOR CARLOS ESPINOSA FACCIOLINCE (LIBERAL PARTY) ON AUGUST 1 AT A ROADBLOCK. ESPINOSA IS A WELL KNOWN MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WITH A REPUTATION FOR CORRUPTION. ESPINOSA AND SEVERAL STAFFERS STOPPED AND SHOWED THEIR CONGRESSIONAL CREDENTIALS AT WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS A MILITARY ROADBLOCK. THIS IS THE THIRD ATTACK ON MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN LESS THAN A WEEK. BETTY CAMACHO WAS ASSASSINATED WITHIN DAYS OF HER RETIREMENT AND THE ELN IS REPORTEDLY BEHIND THE JULY 20 KIDNAPPING OF CONGRESSMAN GERARDO TAMAYO.

4. (U) VENEZUELA: 12 PRESIDENTIAL ASPIRANTS; POSSIBLE ANTI-CHAVEZ FRONT. THE OFFICIAL NOMINATION PERIOD HAS ENDED WITH 12 CANDIDATES REGISTERED FOR DECEMBER'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. POLLS SUGGEST FIVE OF THEM HAVE 84% OF VOTER SUPPORT. CANDIDATE HUGO CHAVEZ STILL WINS POPULARITY POLLS BUT ALSO SHOWS UP ON THE LIST OF CANDIDATES MOST DISLIKED. AD'S ALFARO UCERO IS DISLIKED BY 1% OF THOSE SURVEYED, FOLLOWED BY CLAUDIO FERNIN (65%) AND

CHAVEZ (40%). ANTI-CHAVEZ FORCES ARE CONSIDERING AN ALLIANCE TO BACK A SINGLE CANDIDATE, PARTICULARLY IN

REACTION TO CHAVEZ'S DECLARED INTENTION TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AND NAME A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, IF ELECTED.

5. (C) VENEZUELA: 30+ EXTRADITION REQUESTS FORWARDED TO JUSTICE. I HAS HAS FORWARDED TO JUSTICE THE FILES ON MORE THAN THIRTY EXTRADITION REQUESTS FOR VENEZUELAN BANKERS INVOLVED IN THE 1994 BANKING CRISIS. DOJ REVIEW COULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS. DEPARTMENT POLICY IS NOT TO CONFIRM OR DENY THAT A REQUEST HAS BEEN FILED FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL.

6. (SBU) ECUADOR: ARCO OIL PRODUCTION PROJECT TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED. ARCO STOPPED WORK AND HAS THREATENED TO LEAVE IF THE GOE CANNOT STOP LOCAL INDIGENOUS GROUPS FROM KIDNAPPINGS IN PROTEST OVER THE AMAZON BASIN. IN TWO INCIDENTS THREE ARCO WORKERS AND THREE SUBCONTRACTOR "CONDUCTO" WORKERS WERE SNATCHED AND THEN FREED ON JULY 20 AND JULY 29. ARCO GIVES THE GOE UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH AND NOTES ITS \$1 MILLION A WEEK LOSS. COMPANY OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE LOCALS PARTICULARLY WANT A NEW ROAD ALONGSIDE ARCO'S NEW BURIED PIPELINE. IRONICALLY, ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS HAVE PRAISED ARCO'S EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE THE CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS IN THE FRAGILE TROPICAL RAINFOREST. ALBRIGHT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ADOLPH H EISNER
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